

last, the Government acted Its action \ab
 disastrous Suddenly, four months ahead of the date solemn
 51^ en again
 and again, they de-controlled the coal industry
 Tins sudden
 bombshell broke up the negotiations, directed
 towards a
 national plan, then going on between miners
 and owners,
 precipitated the 1921 dispute, and led straight
 to the col-
 lapse of the Triple Alliance on the day kno%\n
 in Labour
 annals as Black Friday

The failure of industrial effort \vas glaring,
 the economic
 outlook black as it could be Once again,
 therefore, the
 miners looked to political action, as a %va\ out of
 the cruel
 impasse in which they were suffering They
 had already
 a considerable number of M P 's indeed a
 majority of the
 party membership, and among them were
 men, like tie
 late Vernon Hartshorn, of absolute
 outstanding ability
 Too often, ho\\e\er, they \vere apt to select as
 candidates
 men whose long and honourable experience as
 Trade Union
 officials meant that they \vere tired, and not
 able to turn
 effectively to a wholly new type of effort So,
 Sidne\ Webb,
 close to their counsels during the dark \ears
 both before and
 after the Sankey Commission, urged them, at
 this aibis m
 their fate, to select certain really able outside
 champions
 and experts whom they could trust, and send
 them to
 Westminster to state their case there Frank
 Hodges had too
 big a job on hand, the Federation rule which
 barred the
 Secretary from other work was sound, but
 wiry, he urged,
 did they not find a really wmnable seat for a
 man like R H,
 Tawney, whose sen-ices to them had already

been of incal-
culable worth ? Well, came the reply, we'll think
of that, but
why not stand yourself? You are the ideal
man, for us if
you will stand, we'll do it. Tins was no sudden
impulse on
the part of the Miners. Their votes in 1919
returned Webb
top of the poll to the National Executive of
the Party,
although at that time his membership of that
body was but
four years old. They knew him. They
meant, very